

Hazel Cooper
Bikini file
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File

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403177

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

November 3, 1969

Dr. John R. Totter
Director, Division of Biology & Medicine
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington, D. C. 20545

US DOE ARCHIVES

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Dear John:

On Friday October 31, 1969 a conference was held with Mr. Edward Johnston, *Private*
High Commissioner of the Trust Territory, in regard to certain problems con-
cerning the medical surveys of the Marshallese. Dave Bruner and Nat Barr
were with me and Mr. Fred Radewagon, the Washington liaison officer for the
High Commissioner was also present. I also had the pleasure later of meeting
Mrs. Elizabeth Farrington, Director of Territories of the Department of
Interior and discussed briefly most of the problems referred to below. The
following summarizes the subjects discussed.

1. Request by T.T. for AEC support for travel and per diem of Trust Territory personnel participating in the Rongelap surveys (See copies of letters enclosed). I reviewed the background of the medical surveys and expressed appreciation for the fine support the Trust Territory has given us in the past. It was also pointed out that continued careful examination of these exposed populations, particularly in view of the serious development of thyroid abnormalities, would be necessary in the future. Mr. Johnston was entirely sympathetic toward our objectives. He pointed out however, that at a recent meeting of the Micronesian congress, that body recommended against the use of any T.T. funds for the support of any damages or results of AEC-DOD testing, including monetary support of Bikini rehabilitation and the AEC medical surveys. In recent years we have been paying for the use of the ship for the survey as well as most of the expenses. However the Trust Territory had paid for the travel and per diem of their participating personnel, in the survey. Mr. Johnston said that the attitude of the Micronesian congress puts them in a most difficult position and he hoped that we would be able to handle the travel and per diem payments of participating Marshallese personnel (See attached letter from Mr. Coleman). I told him that I had been in correspondence with Mr. William Bonnet, AEC Honolulu, about the subject and that I was assured that there would be sufficient funds to pay travel and per diem for 3-4 Trust Territory personnel on the next survey (the money was available in view of the cancellation of the Bikini counting facility at this time). Mr. Bonnet pointed out that if the AEC concurs with this arrangement in the future more funds (\$3,000.-4,000. annually) would have to be made available for the Bio-medical surveys. I personally feel that the attitude of the Micronesian

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November 3, 1969

Congress is not unreasonable except that as I pointed out to Mr. Johnston they were probably not aware that the Trust Territory participation in these surveys also accomplished part of their routine medical field trip mission and one might argue that they could reasonably provide some monetary support on that basis.

2. The Utirik Situation. The recent discovery of a case of cancer of the thyroid in one of the exposed Utirik women, even though this cancer may not be due to radiation exposure, makes it necessary that we increase our surveillance of this exposed population. This population had received only a low level exposure to fallout. During the past ^{few} years there has been an increasing dissatisfaction on the part of the Utirik^{people} regarding the lack of any monetary compensation for their fallout exposure, such as the Marshallese people had received. I pointed out that I am worried that these people might refuse to submit to our examinations and that outside groups such as the Micronesian congress, lawyers, Trusteeship council might encourage or actually instigate litigation. Early settlement with a minimal monetary payment would preclude this unpleasant possibility and insure a favorable attitude for our examinations. Mr. Johnston pointed out that already he heard that one of the Marshallese (Senators?) was talking about payment to the Utirik people. He agreed that early action was indicated and that he would look into the matter soon and keep in touch with me. I do not know where the funds would come from for this. In view of the attitude of the Micronesian congress probably not from the T.T.; perhaps from the Department of Interior or AEC?

3. Radiological Monitoring of the Bikini People. Mr. Johnston indicated that the present plan was not to return the Bikini people to their home island until after the village was completed and their land could support them, a matter of five or more years. Small groups of Bikini men might return at times but no real habitation of the island would take place for a number of years. He said that he felt that the bunker that we had wanted to use for the whole body counting could probably be used without any rental (the previous rental quotation was exorbitant), due to a change in the attitude of the magistrate. I pointed out that it would not be feasible to reconstruct the bunker now since the DASA work team had left the island. Moreover, we intend to try doing some whole body counts on board the ship this year. If successful it would be a simple matter to go by Bikini for a couple of days and bring the people on board for counting. If this did not pan out Mr. Johnston indicated that use of the new dispensary to be constructed at Bikini might be feasible. Since it will be some time before any sizeable number of Bikini people are back there is no urgency to the problem and it is believed collection of urine samples for radiochemical analyses will suffice in the meantime.

I was glad to have the opportunity to meet Mr. Johnston and Mrs. Farrington and feel that they have a real interest in our problems and willingness to cooperate in every way possible. Mr. Radewagon said that as Mr. Johnston's liaison officer in Washington he would appreciate receiving copies of correspondence and would be happy to help out whenever he could.

DOE ARCHIVES

Sincerely,

Bob

Robert A. Conard, M.D.

RAC:jr
encls.